

A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
David A. Naff



ELDER TURTLE



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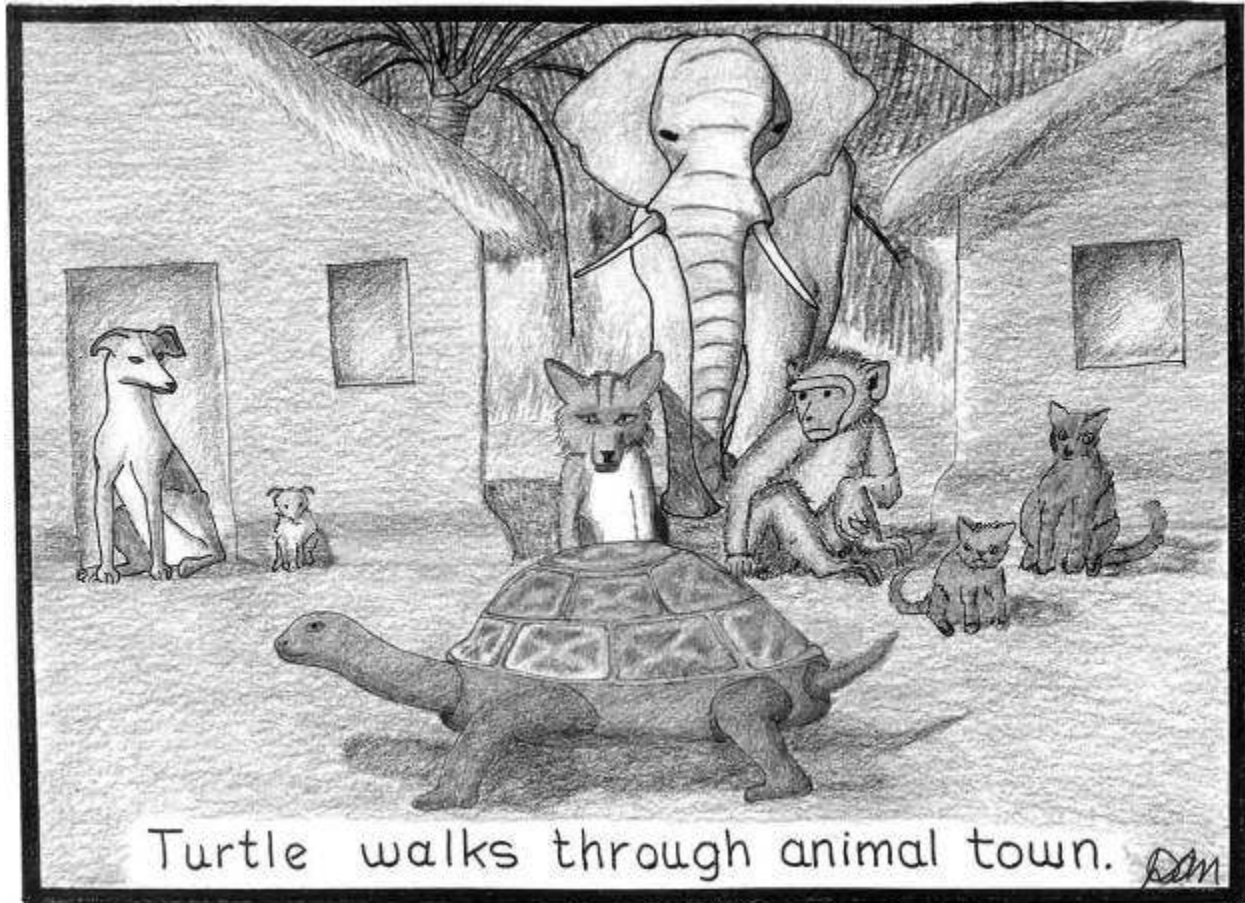
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By Spark Team



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ELDER TURTLE

Note to the reader: Words and phrases typical of West Africa are retained, and indicated by italics.

“Toad Frog says he is not a drummer, but he sits like one.”

“Lizard would like to sit down but his tail will not let him.”

Elder Turtle was a well respected elder in animal town. Everyone spoke about how strong and good and wise he was. All the mothers would tell their children, “If only you would grow up to be as wise and honorable as Elder Turtle, then my heart would be satisfied.”

When Elder Turtle walked through the town with his shell all waxed and polished, he was greeted respectfully, and mothers holding their children would point to Elder Turtle and tell them to do as Elder Turtle did. When Elder Turtle heard these things, he could just feel his shell get bigger and bigger.

In council meetings he would admonish all the others to do as he did. Everyone admitted he was right, for in many things Elder Turtle was very wise.

But who gave Elder Turtle wisdom? And was Elder Turtle wise in all things? Let us see

One day as Elder Turtle was walking through the town, he heard the drum beating in the market place. Squeaky the Squirrel was making an important announcement. He was reminding everyone that:

Bim! Bam! Bim! "Tomorrow is the day,"

Bim! Bam! Bim! "We must elect a new chief."

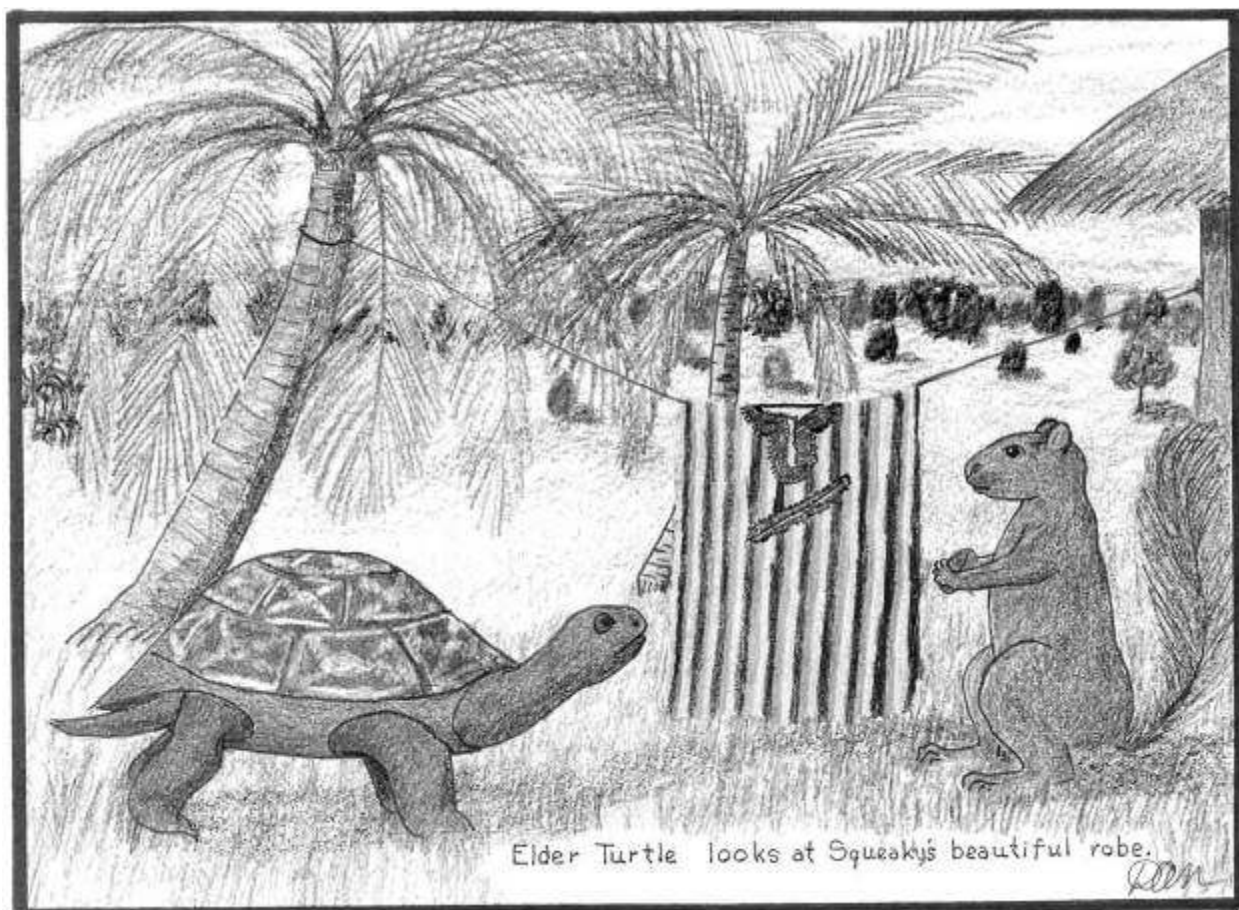
Bim! Bam! Bim! "Everyone must come,"

Bim! Bam! Bim! "to the council meeting,"

Bim! Bam! Bim! "and **vote**." Bim! Bam! Bim!

Now Elder Turtle began to think how good it would be if he could be the new chief. "I would rule the town well. I would give good orders. I would make wise laws so the town would prosper. Then everyone would look up to me. And everyone would bow down to me. That would be *fine too much*."

Just then he was passing Squeaky Squirrel's house. There on the clothes line was a beautiful new robe. Elder Turtle began to think. "That is a beautiful new robe. It must be very expensive. Now if I had that robe, I could sell it and buy a very



fine turban. How the people would admire me if I could wear such a fine turban when I am chief."

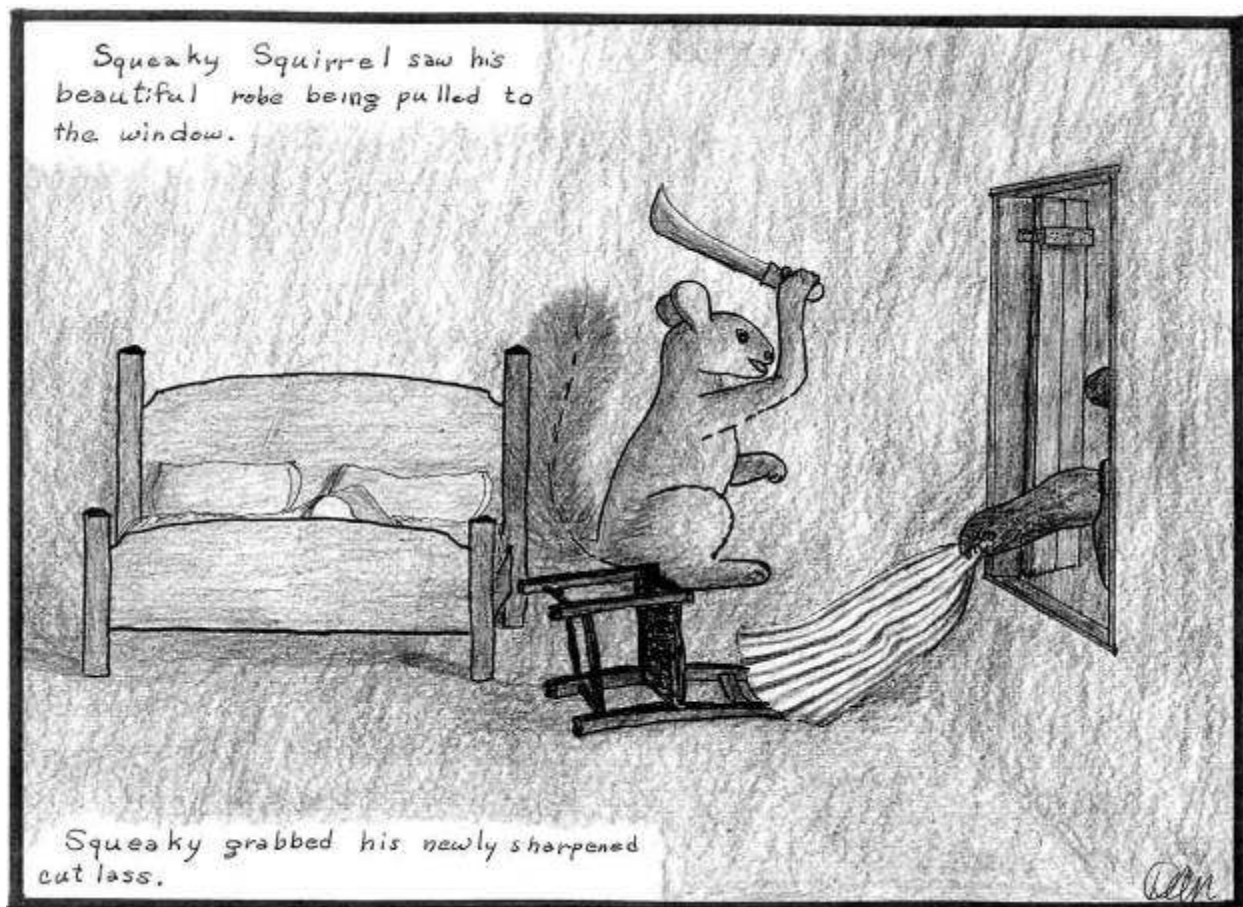
Elder Turtle started to go on to his house, but then turned around and came back to feel the cloth in the beautiful robe.

"Indeed it is very beautiful," he thought, "A most expensive robe. I do really need a new turban to wear when I am chief. Hm-m-m-m."

Off went Elder Turtle thinking very hard. He kept on thinking all that evening and into the night.

Was it wise for Elder Turtle to keep thinking of that robe?

Then, when it was very late and everyone else was in his own house and sleeping, Elder Turtle slowly and quietly crept out of his house.

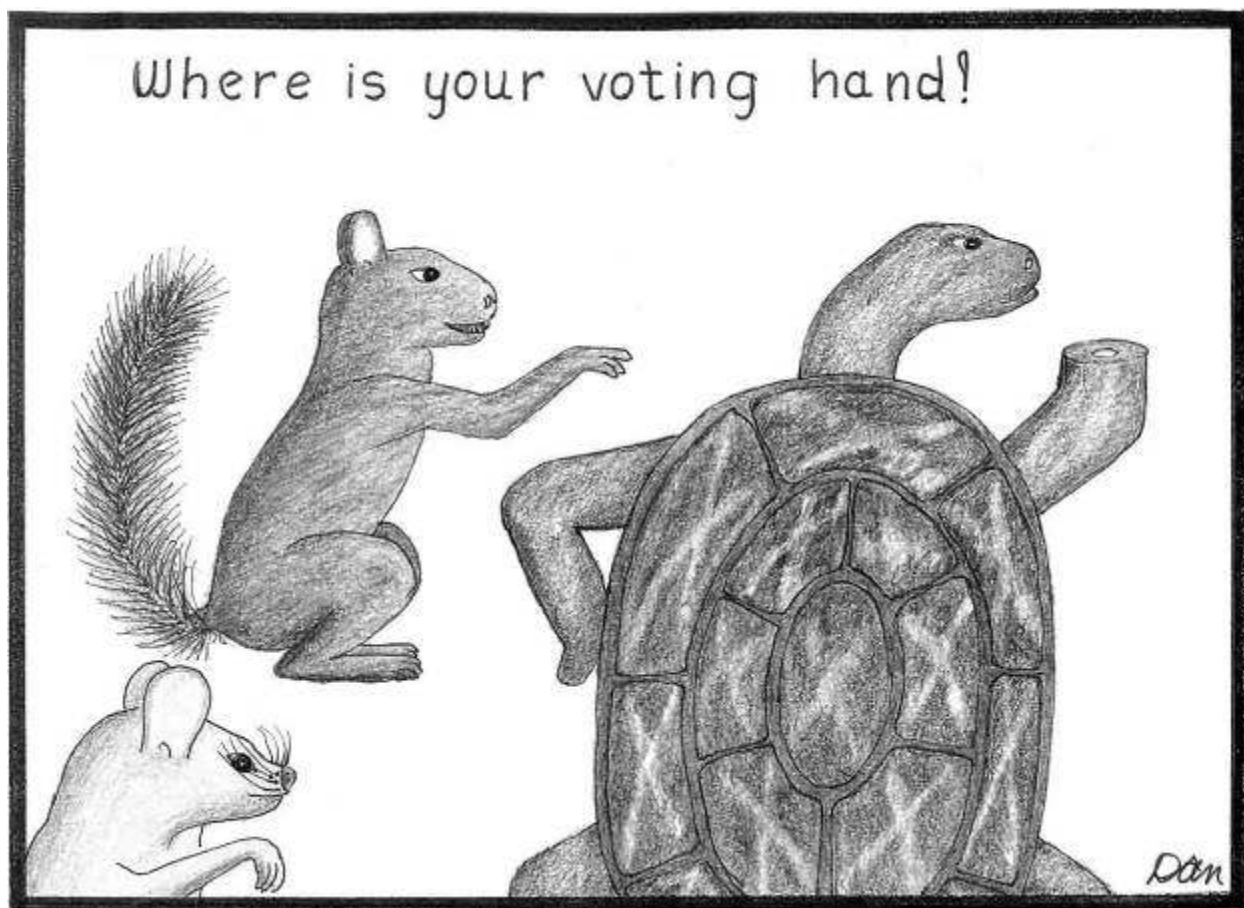


"No one will know," he thought. "No one will **ever** know."

Elder Turtle crept quietly along to Squeaky's house. Of course the new robe was not outside. Squeaky had taken it inside. But look! The window was open! Softly Elder Turtle reached inside and began feeling around for the robe.

Ah, there it was over the back of a chair. Elder Turtle began to carefully pull the robe toward the window. All at once the chair fell over with a crash but Elder Turtle kept on pulling. Squeaky Squirrel awoke with a start. He saw a hand pulling his robe out of the window. He grabbed his newly sharpened cutlass and chopped off the hand. Elder Turtle drew back his arm suddenly and hobbled off to his house.

The next day, the day of the election, Elder Turtle got up with difficulty and prepared for the big town meeting. His arm



did hurt him *plentyo*, but he must be at that meeting so he could be elected chief.

Elder Turtle left for the meeting hiding his stump of an arm inside his shell. It was late when he got to the meeting. It was time to vote. Squeaky Squirrel was in charge. Different ones were saying who should be the chief.

Soon Squeaky announced the candidates. They were Messenger Mouse and Elder Turtle.

"Now it is time we should vote. Are you ready to vote?" asked Squeaky.

Everyone was shouting excitedly. "Yes." "Yes." "Yes."

"All in favor of Messenger Mouse, raise your right hand," Squeaky said. Many hands went up.

"1, 2, 3,..." Squeaky was counting votes, "...22, 23, 24. There are 24 votes for Messenger Mouse."

"Now all in favor of Elder Turtle put up your right hand."

Again many hands went up. Elder Turtle was so anxious to be chief that he forgot all about his missing hand and held up his stump of his right arm.

"1, 2, 3,..." Squeaky was counting votes, "...21, 22, 23,... Er-r-r, Oh! Elder Turtle don't you have a voting hand?"

Every one turned to look and saw the cut off stump of an arm. Elder Turtle knew that Squeaky knew who tried to steal his new robe. Soon everyone would know!

Elder Turtle quickly pulled his arm back inside his shell. He was so ashamed that he went off to a hole, crawled in and never came out again.

Now how about you? When it comes to voting for Jesus, do you have a voting hand? Are there things that you have done or think about doing that would spoil your witness or your testimony? Remember what God says in Proverbs 16:18. "Pride comes before being destroyed and a proud spirit comes before a fall." Or what about Hebrews 13:5? "Keep your lives free from the love of money. Be happy with what you have ..."
Obey these verses so you can keep your voting hand.

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